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PUBLIC HEALTH REPORTS

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PLAGUE REPORTED IN NEW ORLEANS.

Dr. Oscar Dowling, collaborating epidemiologist, United States Public Health Service, reported by telegraph June 27 the occurrence of a case of plague in New Orleans in the person of C. N., a native of Sweden, 49 years of age, who had been in the city since June 16. History of previous residence was unobtainable. The patient died June 28, and the diagnosis is reported to have been confirmed by necropsy and bacteriological examination.

Dr. Dowling reported a second case June 28 in the person of R. W., white, age 54, who it appears occupied a room next to the case No. 1 at the home of the Volunteers of America.

The city and State authorities, together with officers of the United States Public Health Service, are cooperating to take such measures as are indicated to ascertain what foci of infection, if any, exist in the city and to eradicate such as may be found, both for the protection of the people of New Orleans and for the protection of other communities. Proper measures will be taken to prevent the carrying of infection, if such exists, from the city to other places within the United States and to foreign countries.

CANCER.

IS IT ON THE INCREASE?

There are those who believe that cancer is increasing in frequency throughout the civilized world. There are those who doubt that there is any actual increase. Those who believe it is increasing usually base their opinion upon the greater frequency with which it has been given in recent years as a cause of death. Those who question whether we have as yet any dependable evidence that the disease is increasing believe that the greater frequency with which it is given as a cause of death is due probably to a more widely disseminated knowledge among people in general regarding the disease and more particularly to improved medical training and an increased ability on the part of physicians to recognize the condition.

Certainly in the United States, with our previous very unsatisfactory standards of medical education, it is safe to say that the average physician's ability to diagnose cancer was not always to be depended upon, and that the unrecognized cases were probably numerous. With improved medical education, with our more exact knowledge as to the nature and symptoms of cancer, and with the increasing attention given to the disease it is to be expected that cancers will be recognized in a greater proportion of cases than formerly, and will be assigned with increasing frequency as a cause of death.

The frequency with which a disease is given as a cause of death in death certificates, it must be borne in mind, may be influenced not only by the actual frequency of the disease, but also by the training and diagnostic acumen of practicing physicians and by the amount of attention given to the disease in current medical literature.

Whether it is increasing in frequency or not, cancer is one of the serious maladies of civilized man which has baffled medical research, of which the cause remains unknown, and for the prevention of which we still lack definite knowledge. It remains a challenge to the best efforts of the clinician and research worker.

There can hardly be any question that it is desirable that people in general should know that in adults sores and ulcers which do not heal within the ordinary time are always open to the suspicion of being cancerous and that their true nature should be ascertained, as it is in the early stage that the possibility of cure in cancer is greatest.

COURT DECISIONS RELATING TO MORBIDITY REPORTS.

THE RIGHT OF THE COMMUNITY TO REQUIRE PHYSICIANS TO REPORT CASES OF DISEASE COMING UNDER THEIR OBSERVATION AND THE PURPOSES THEREOF AND REASONS THEREFOR AS STATED BY COURTS OF LAST RESORT.

Laws requiring the notification of the occurrence of cases of disease are of comparatively recent origin, but the necessity for the protection of the community by securing prompt reports of cases of at least the communicable diseases is now generally recognized. The large number of laws requiring the reporting of cases of communicable and industrial diseases which have been enacted during the last few years makes it important that health officers and others responsible for the enforcement of these laws should be familiar with the construction placed upon them by the courts.

It is well settled that laws, ordinances, and regulations having for their object the protection of the public health are to be so construed as to make them effective for the purpose intended, as far as possible. The Supreme Court of the United States in *Dobbins v. Los Angeles* (195 U. S., 223, at p. 235), said:

It may be admitted that every intendment is to be made in favor of the lawfulness of the exercise of municipal power making regulations to promote the public health and